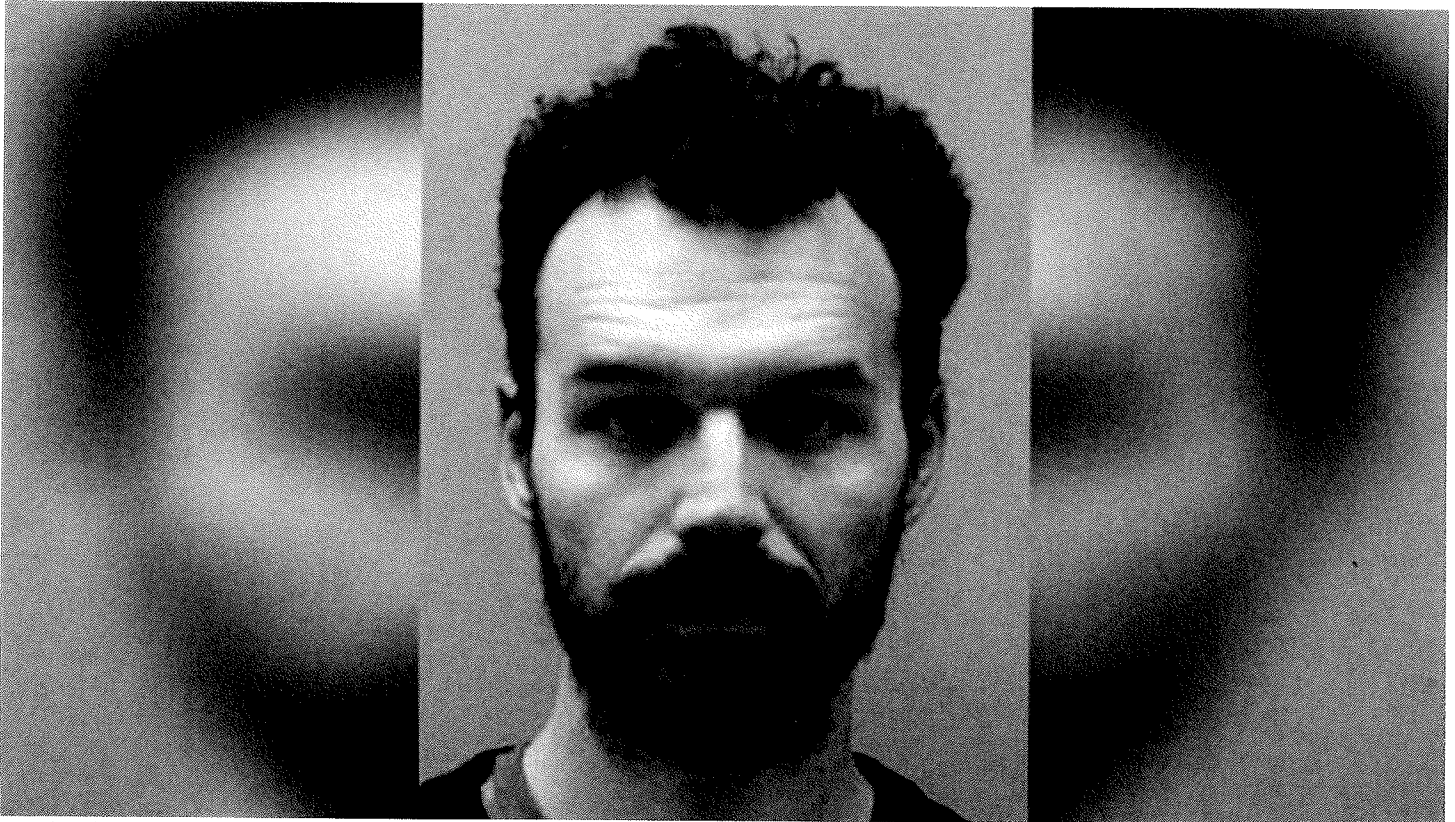


## Widow of Tennessee Hatchet Attack Victim Sues DC Department of Corrections Over Suspect's Escape

By Scott MacFarlane

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Nashville Police

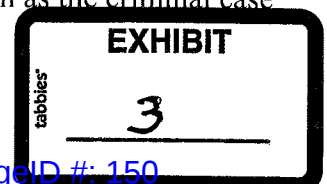
The widow of a man killed in a gruesome hatchet attack in Tennessee has filed a wrongful death suit against the D.C. Department of Corrections and a Southeast Washington halfway house.

The suit alleges negligence in allowing suspected killer Domenic Micheli to escape from the D.C. halfway house days before the June 2018 attack.

Micheli is charged with murdering his former boss, Joel Paavola of suburban Nashville, at a fitness center just weeks after his suspected escape from D.C. The killing triggered national headlines, in part because of the gruesome details of the hatchet attack, which included the use of a meat cleaver and a tomahawk. Micheli has pleaded not guilty.

Paavola's widow, Lana, filed the federal civil suit in U.S. District Court in Tennessee, even as the criminal case against Micheli is pending. Paavola has five children.

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Weeks before the homicide, a D.C. federal judge ordered Micheli held at the Hope Village halfway house on Langston Place in Southeast. At the time, Micheli was facing a charge of trespassing on White House grounds in April 2018 and awaiting further court proceedings in D.C.

The suit alleges Micheli escaped Hope Village sometime in mid-to-late May and the halfway house failed to promptly notify authorities about the escape and “failed to take any steps to ensure that Mr. Micheli was apprehended before he would harm the public.”

In her suit, Paavola alleges in the days between Micheli’s escape and the murder, Micheli posted “a series of bizarre and deeply concerning messages on Facebook” that authorities could have used to locate and apprehend him.

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In one example, Paavola contends: “On May 26, 2018, Mr. Micheli claimed to be the ‘Sun of God’ and warned that there will not be any mercy doled out after this post.”

A D.C. Department of Corrections spokeswoman told the News4 I-Team the District “doesn’t comment on open litigation.” A Hope Village official did not immediately return a request for comment.

Blake Carter, the attorney representing Paavola, told the News4 I-Team the legal team has collected a series of court records about recent escapes from Hope Village halfway house for use in the litigation. The complaint includes one instance in which the center “negligently released” a man in 2002 who would later commit a series of crimes, including the murder of a 9-year-old girl.

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U.S. Bureau of Prisons records obtained by the I-Team under the Freedom of Information Act show nearly 300 cases of escape investigated at the Hope Village halfway house since 2016.

Micheli’s D.C. case for trespassing on White House grounds is on hold, pending the outcome of the murder trial.

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